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Fanaticism! Cruelty!! Bigotry!!!

THE
PARTICULARS
OF THE HORRIBLE
MURDER

OF
CATHARINE SINNOTT,

A Child under Four Years of Age,

BY THE

REV. JOHN CARROLL,

AN

Irish Catholic Priest,

Under Pretence of performing

A MIRACLE,

BY CASTING DEVILS OUT OF THE CHILD,

Which took Place at

KILLINICK, in the COUNTY of WEXFORD,

ON FRIDAY, JULY 9, 1824;

INCLUDING THE

Coroner's Inquest,

AND

Reflections on the Influence of Catholic Priests over the Minds of the People,
as exemplified in this melancholy Case.

“ The child piteously cried out to her Father, ‘ Oh, save me! save me!! ’ which he was proceeding to do, but some of the miserable Fanatics present actually held him back!!! The Mother of the child stood by, among the other Spectators, and, like them, had a full Conviction that her Child was, as the Priest had stated, ‘ possessed,’ and that he was performing a MIRACLE to drive out the Evil Spirit!!! Nay, the infatuated Mother actually assisted the Priest in the Performance of his horrible Work!!! ”

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PARTICULARS

OF THE

MURDER, &c.

THERE has never been in the records of civilized society a more dreadful exhibition of bigotry and cruelty, than has lately taken place in Ireland. A poor child, about three years of age, was murdered by a priest, *in the presence of its parents* and many spectators, none of whom would, themselves, or suffer others to, interfere, under the idea that the priest was *miraculously expelling an evil spirit!!*

Upon the conduct of the wretched author of this tragedy, we have no observation to offer. It appears, beyond all doubt, that the unfortunate man was deranged—but as to

the others, what shall we say? That a number of persons could stand tamely by and see an infant victim put to a cruel and lingering death; that the *parents* could hear their child cry “save me, save me”—and yet steel their hearts, under any, and above all, under such a pretext, is a degree of callous superstition and cold blooded bigotry which can hardly be paralleled.

This transaction is calculated to excite most serious and anxious thoughts in the minds of all who are any way interested in, or connected with, Ireland, and its true interests. At present we shall content ourselves with two observations. We have now a *practical* result of the consequences of the doctrine of miracles, as lately enforced and recommended to their flocks by the Roman Catholic Bishops, Drs. MURRAY and DOYLE. When the poor benighted people to whom their Pastorals were addressed are gravely told that HOHENLOHE’S (supposed) miracles plainly manifest God’s express favour to their particular communion, and that this power is continued and confided to that church to the present day, it is not to be wondered at that *they* extend the principle to every pastor of the church, and that every curate is looked on as capable of wielding the

powers of omnipotence. Observe, too, the extraordinary influence of the Roman Catholic priesthood over their flocks. How this influence has been attained, or secured, is not now the question—*it exists*, and to a degree we could hardly have conceived. Not the greatest indecency—not the most revolting idiotcy of manner—not even proceeding to shed the blood of helpless innocence—not the dying groans of the sufferer—appear to have suggested to the spectators the slightest thoughts derogatory to the sanctity of the clerical character, to the possibility of his acting under worldly or irregular impulses, or to have taken away an iota of the reverence due to his supposed attributes. When we reflect that there is a vast population partaking of these opinions, and acting under this influence—when we consider that there is such a mass of wild passions and frenzied feelings, ungovernable except by this engine alone, and by it alone capable of being directed—to good or evil, it is no longer a matter of astonishment to us that Ireland has hitherto baffled the anxious endeavours of wise and good men of all parties, labouring for her good.

Coroner's Inquest.

On Monday, July 12, Arthur Meadows, Henry Archer, Luis Van Wilmsdorf Richards, Esqrs. and the Rev. William Hughes, clerk, Magistrates, met to hold an inquest on the body. The following persons were sworn on the

JURY.

RICHARD BENNETT,
JAMES KELLY,
WILLIAM BENNETT,
WILLIAM CODD,
JAMES WINTERS,
PATRICK WALSH,
WILLIAM HIGGINBOTHAM,
WILLIAM CARTHY,
WILLIAM WALSH,
JOHN PENDER,
JOHN CORMICK, and
RICHARD SYLVESTER.

WILLIAM FURLONG, *sworn.*

He recollects Father John Carroll, on Friday evening, the 9th instant, going into the house of Thomas Sinnott, father of the deceased ; went in after him ; heard the priest saying there was an evil spirit in the

child ; he (the priest) got a tub, put it over the child in bed, and danced on it ; he made use of the words “ Jesus, Jesus, assist me ! ” and “ Father, Father ! ” he then sat down on the tub, and repeated the same words ; the child cried to its father and mother to save it, previous to being put under the tub ; never heard the child cry after the tub was placed over it ; did not see anything done to the child previous to its being put under the tub ; is certain the child was alive when the tub was put on it ; the priest first began to sing, and then to whistle ; he unbuttoned his gaiter, and took off his stocking ; he whistled and beat time to the tune of a hornpipe on the side of the bed ; witness believes the priest remained about three hours standing and sitting on the tub ; the priest took the tub from off the child ; saw the child, and believed it to be dead ; the father and mother were present, to the best of witness’s opinion ; there were several persons in the room ; does not at present recollect their names ; believes the priest called for water and salt, which he put into the tub ; after witness suspected the child was dead, he went home to Ballysheehan, and left the father, and mother, and priest in the room, and several others ; to the best of his opinion, the priest’s sister was in the room during the whole transaction, whom witness desired to go home ; there was no interference on the part of the persons present to save the child, except what was attempted by witness and its father ; recollects Paddy Parle prevented him (witness) from endeavouring to save the child, and asked him—“ was he mad ? ” Nicholas Wickham, of Assaily, was present during part of the transaction, and held a candle for

the priest ; he (Wickham) made no exertions to save the child ; witness recollects his brother-in-law, James Sinnott, and (Sinnott's) wife being in the room while the priest was singing ; cannot say he saw the priest on the tub.

From a Magistrate.—Could the people have prevented the priest from killing the child ?—Yes ; certainly.

THOMAS SINNOTT, *sworn.*

He was father of the deceased ; recollects Friday the 9th instant ; did not send for the priest ; was not at his house when the priest came there ; believes the priest was half an hour in the house before him ; the child was three years and a half old, and was not sick at the time ; when he came in he heard a noise ; went into the room where the child was, and she spoke to him ; the priest was in the room ; the child said, “ Oh, daddy ! ” the priest and the child were in bed together ; witness attempted to take the child away, but some persons prevented him ; he tried again to take the child ; he saw nothing more except the child dead as the priest was going ; never saw the priest deranged before at any time ; witness resides in the parish of which the priest is curate ; can't recollect any person, but thinks there were a great number in the room.

CATHARINE DOYLE, *sworn.*

She saw the child on Friday, 9th July, and saw its mother undress it and put it to bed.

PATRICK PARLE, *sworn*.

He recollects the evening of Friday last; saw the priest (Carroll) at Sinnott's, who ordered them all out of the room; thinks he did so in a wild manner; heard he had beaten a woman that evening; thinks he saw the priest sitting on the tub; there was a candle in the room.

PHILIP WALSH, *sworn*.

He was present about eleven o'clock on the night of Friday, the 9th; he went into the room, and saw the priest, Carroll; saw him and the child in the bed—the priest sat on the child; he then stood up; heard the child cry, and thinks it called “Mamma!” saw the priest on the bed several times; he (the priest) danced and sung over the child; there were present Nicholas Wickham, the father and mother of the child, the priest's sister, Nicholas Corish, of Ballysheehan, Walter Scallan, of Killinick (carpenter), and others; heard the priest order in a tub, and it was brought in by James Devereux, of Ballyraan, and witness; the priest desired the tub to be settled before him; he then called for some salt, and threw it into the tub, with the plate; the tub was nearly full of water; he (the priest) overturned the tub on the child; witness having seen the leg outside the tub conceived the body to have been under it; he heard the people say, they thought the child had an evil spirit, but witness could not tell what to make of it,

except when the priest upset the tub; he (the priest) said “bury him in the depth of the sea!” no person tried to save the child, except the father when the child was in bed.

PEGGY KEREVAN, *sworn*.

She saw the priest the evening of the 9th (Friday) at the house where the child was killed; heard him order the people out; saw a tub, and the leg of a child appearing from under it, and the priest sitting on the tub, he was pulling his hair and stamping with his feet; heard it mentioned that the child had an evil spirit, and that he was casting him out.

Dr. DEVEREUX, *sworn*.

He examined the child, Catharine Sinnott, there was a large contusion on the head, and great marks of violence on the abdomen; the child might have died from either of the above causes, or from suffocation when under the tub.

Dr. RENWICK, *sworn*.

He corroborated the above evidence.

VERDICT.

“We agree that the child, Catharine Sinnott, deceased, came by her death in consequence of the violence she received from the Rev. John Carroll, as adduced by the evidence.

“Signed for self and fellow Jurors,

“RICHARD SYLVESTER, Foreman.”

It was generally reported that one of the poor women ill-treated by him had died.

The Magistrates have, in pursuance of the verdict of the Jury, committed the Rev. Mr. Carroll to gaol.

The Coroner, we say, ought to have issued his warrant for the seizure of every individual present at that barbarous and unheard-of sacrifice. They were, one and all, guilty of murder. The punishment of some of these persons might recal others to their duties, and would at last contribute to check the miracle-workers, who may, one day or other, apply "their miraculous organs" to no very salutary end.

OBSERVATIONS.

We have received the following observations from a Correspondent at Wexford:—

For several days it had been intimated, by written notices despatched some miles round the country, that a miracle was to have been wrought, on Friday last, by the Rev. John Carroll, Roman Catholic Curate of Ballymore. On that day he visited a man of the name of Henry Neale, of Killinick, who was lying dangerously ill of apoplexy. Immediately after his arrival, he said the man was troubled with devils, he jumped on him several times, and cried out to the people present to keep him in prayer, in order to dispossess the sick man of the evil spirits. Such was the effect of his operations upon one of the by-standers, named Peggy Danby, that she fell to the ground in hysterics; upon

which Mr. Carroll jumped out of bed off Neale's body, and seized the woman in a violent manner, alleging that she was full of devils, at the same time calling on Jesus to assist him in expelling them. He trampled on the unfortunate woman, broke several of her ribs, and left her for dead, and then observed that he would go and bury the devils which he had secured. The blood was gurgling in the woman's throat, and some of the superstitious wretches who were looking on, exclaimed, that they "saw the devils come out of her mouth!" The priest proceeded to the bridge of Assaily, about four hundred yards distant from the scene of his operations, and on his return said, "he had buried them reptiles of hell!" He then went to the house of Robert Moran, of the same place, and struck his wife so repeatedly and violently, that when he left her she was scarcely able to speak, and her head was swelled to a shocking degree. The next house he visited was that of Thomas Sinnott, nailer, also of Killinick, accompanied all this time by at least fifty persons, (some say by upwards of two hundred, but this is an exaggeration.) The devil-killer asked the servant for her mistress, who told him that she was not at home, but that she would go for her; he desired her to do so. In a few minutes Mrs. Moran appeared. He asked her for some refreshment, which she procured for him. At this time a child (a fine little girl between three and four years of age), then in bed in the room in which he was, began to cry: he consulted his breviary, and immediately affirmed that there was a devil in the child. Pursuing the same course which he did with Neale, he jumped into the bed, and on the body of the infant! The father of the little inno-

cent entered at the time—the child piteously cried out, “Oh save me! save me!” which he was proceeding to do, but some of the miserable fanatics present actually held him back!!! It may be asked who was holding the mother of the child? No one—she was as free as any of the spectators, and, like them, had a full conviction that her child was, as the Priest had stated, “possessed,” and that he was performing a miracle to drive out the evil spirit!!! Nay, the infatuated mother was not only without restraint, as to any relief she might have been inclined to have afforded her infant, but actually assisted the Priest in the performance of his horrible work!!! He ordered her to get a tub of water and some salt; these she instantly procured. The innocent little sufferer lay bleeding and insensible in bed; he poured the contents of the tub upon her; and as the water mingled with the stream of life, he cried out with enthusiasm to those around him, “Behold a miracle! I have turned the water into blood!!!” He then turned the tub over upon his victim, the edge of it coming upon the child’s neck, mercifully completed the tragedy by putting an end to its sufferings!! Having desired the parents of the child not to allow any one into the room, nor to touch the child till his return, he departed to Wexford. His directions were religiously obeyed, and the besotted parents anxiously awaited his arrival. Next day (Saturday) his (the priest’s) sister called to Sinnott’s, and told them to be contented, that their child would be quite well on her brother’s return!!!

Doctor Devereux, who attended Mr. Carroll occa-

signally for the last three years, visited him a few hours previous to the unfortunate occurrence in question, and considered him insane. The next evening he found him in a high state of insanity. About two hours after Doctor Devereux saw him, he was visited by Doctor Renwick, and both concurred in opinion as to the unsettled state of his mind. Indeed it would be a waste of words to say any thing upon a subject so self-evident. No individual who peruses the above afflicting statement can for a moment entertain a doubt that the unfortunate Mr. Carroll acted throughout under the influence of insanity. Surprise, of course, vanishes as respects his conduct; but how shall we designate that of the crowd of spectators who surrounded him, some of whom lent their aid to the furtherance of his designs, and all of whom, to the last moment, full of that reverential awe with which a Roman Catholic peasant looks upon a clergyman of his communion, placed implicit faith in the propriety and efficacy of the wild and dreadful proceedings of the unhappy maniac! Who would have thought that such fanaticism existed in any part of the kingdom, much less in a county which forms such a contrast to all the others? The peasantry even of the neighbouring county of Waterford are a century behind the peasantry of this county in point of civilization, and yet in such a county, in one so improved and respectable, and above all, in the Barony of Forth, that such a scene should have been exhibited, no reader can let pass him without his "special wonder."

THE END.

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